



Article

# Maxims Of Politeness Performed by Female Sellers at Traditional Market in Sumatera Barat

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## A B S T R A C T

This research is aimed at describing the maxims of politeness used by female sellers in a traditional market in Sumatera Barat. The research was conducted in one traditional market in Sumatera Barat, namely Batu Sangkar. The data are any utterances produced by female sellers in a traditional market in a traditional market in Batu Sangkar. The data were taken by the observational method with note-taking, recording, and interviewing techniques. The analysis was done by using the concept proposed by (Oktavianus & Revita, 2013; Leech, 1983). The result of the analysis was descriptively done and used the chart. The percentage was also used to identify the number of maxims that occurred. Having analyzed the data, it is found that the female sellers used four maxims in their interaction with the buyers. They are 1) tact, 2) agreement, and 3) modesty. There are two types of agreement between the sellers and the buyers, namely using 1) verbal and 2) non-verbal agreement. The non-verbal agreement is the indication of the insincerity of the sellers of the price bargained by the buyers. The sellers do not get much profit from the price offered by the buyers.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a kind of strategy to make the communication smooth. Through politeness, what the speaker wants can be gained (Oktavianus & Revita, 2013; Revita, Trioclarise, & Anggreiny, 2017a). It can be seen in the process of communication involving the sellers and the buyers. The polite way of the sellers will influence the buyers. Even some buyers will buy things even though the price is high. It is only because of the politeness (Revita, Trioclarise, & Anggreiny, 2017a). This proves how being polite is important in order the communication can run very well.

Politeness is taught by parents to their children (Revita, Trioclarise, & Gunawan, 2017). The politeness is believed to be one of the good traits everyone should have (Kramsch, 2011). Thus, parents and adults are expected to show politeness

as it is culturally transmitted over generations. These people will become the model for the youth to be imitated in interaction and communication. Revita (2017) stated that the norms and traditions of a certain community in speaking must be inherited through daily activities. The youth will imitate and do what they see. There is no reason to say when the youth cannot fully apply the norms of a society without any model to be emulated (Sifianou, 2012).

Minangkabau is one of few cultures that still practice good teaching of politeness in behaving around people, talking to elders and market transactions as a buyer or seller, and many more. The dominance of Minangkabau culture in West Sumatera meant that these politeness forms play a central role in the area (Hastuti, Julianti, Erlangga, & Oswari, 2013). A woman, for example, is considered polite when she talks in a low tone and behave lady-like (Aminifard, Safaei, & Askari, 2014). Even

in Minangkabau, when educating the daughters, parents often remind them that they are girls who must behave as the girls must be. It will be different from the education to the son that is never treated in such away. For example, when a daughter and a son behaves wrongly, the response of their parents tend to be like in data 1-2.

1) ***Kalau anak padusi ndak buliah co itu do. Awak harus baetika.***

‘As a girl, you may not behave like that. You must have ethics.’

2) ***Ondee, baa anak ibu ko. Elok-elok kalau duduak tu yo.***

‘Oh My God, what is my son. Sit politely!’

There are two different forms of education daughter and son for a similar intention. It is caused by the mindset of the society that females must behave politely but not males (Beeching, 2002). In utterance 1, the speaker explicitly stated that the hearer is a girl, and as a girl, she must have a good attitude.

The way of parents teaching since early age made Minangkabau women tend to be careful in speaking. They try to be polite in speaking on every occasion. Being polite is regarded as very important because it has something to do with others’ faces (Brown, 2015). It is in line with the role of language as a means of communication that involve at least two participants, the speaker, and the hearer. In communication, there is a possibility to hurt others due to language use. People must know how to use language politely such as in making the request, refusing, promising, or expressing the feeling (- & Tanto, 2018; Ogiermann, 2009; Sifianou, 2012)

The aspect of politeness is not only taught by parents to their children but also for language learners. English, for instance, as the international language is studied by many people from various parts of the world. This English can become a 2<sup>nd</sup> language or foreign language for these learners. So, when learning English, this politeness must be transferred (Chiravate, 2011; Ilmiani, Dwi ; Wijayanto, Agus ; Hikmat, 2016; Rahmat, Revita, & Fitriyah, 2019). They must know the concept of politeness from the English point of view. Therefore, being impolite can be avoided (Culpeper,

2013; Suci Erza & Hamzah, 2018), especially in the society that concerns much on politeness. Minangkabau, for example, puts politeness as the most crucial point in communication. Because of this, the phenomenon of trafficking occurs because of the ability of panders in communication. The politeness becomes the tools for these panders to camouflage the fact. Consequently, many women became the victims of this polite way in persuading (Revita, Trioclarise, & Anggreiny, 2017a).

Politeness is something regarded as positive and usually used to indicate a sincerely good attitude. The politeness may influence the way people view something, even in trading activity. The high price is ignored as the sellers offer their merchandise politely. Many women omit that they prefer buying things to those who give good service event the price is higher.

Moreover, politeness can be viewed differently from the gender perspective in which a particular society regulates that females must behave politely but very loose of men (Aydinoğlu, 2013; Beeching, 2002). It created a different attitude of males and females in viewing the world (Revita, Trioclarise, & Anggreiny, 2017b). It is similar to the domain of the politics that hypocrisy is conducted covered by the politeness. Many people have been deceived the politicians due to the very polite way of persuasion (Davidson, 2004).

The above phenomena display that politeness occurs in every domain, and being polite might give several impacts toward the response of the hearer. It is closely related to how to speak pragmatically. As the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (reader) (Yule et al., 2010), Pragmatics also deals with context (Ike Revita, 2013; Revita, 2008, 2018). Context can be everything (Bublitz & Norrick, 2011; Revita, 2010; Revita, Trioclarise, & Anggreiny, 2017c). With the help of context, communication can run smoothly because there is shared knowledge and common ground among the participants (Revita, Trioclarise, & Anggreiny, 2017b).

To be polite in conversational exchange, Leech (1983) proposed six maxims of politeness. They are maxim of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Tact maxim requires

the participants to minimize the cost to others and maximize the benefit to others. It is implemented in directive/not positive and commissive utterances. Generosity maxim requires the participants to minimize benefits to self and maximize cost to self. It is expressed in directive/not positive and commissive utterances. Approbation maxim requires the speaker to minimize dispraise to others and maximize praise to others. It is expressed in expressive and assertive utterances.

In modesty maxim, the participants must minimize praise of self and maximize the dispraise of self. It is applied in assertive/ representatives and expressive like the approbation maxim. Both the approbation maxim and the modesty maxim concern the degree of good or bad evaluation of others or self that is uttered by the speaker. The approbation maxim is exemplified by courtesy of congratulation. On the other hand, the modesty maxim usually occurs in apologies. The sample of the modesty maxim is below. Agreement maxim is considered as minimizing disagreement to other and maximizing agreement to others. It applies in symbolic speech acts. Sympathy maxim requires the speaker to maximize sympathy and minimize antipathy between them. It is expressed in the representative speech acts proposed by Searle. These maxims vary from culture to culture. What may be considered polite in one culture may be strange or rude in another.

The article is describing the politeness of the traders in selling the merchandise in the traditional market in West Sumatera. Each market has its own uniqueness related to the politeness of the sellers. The maxims of politeness implemented are under the objective of the research.

## II. METHOD

The appropriate choice of the strategy to have polite speaking is very important. The intention to speak politely can be interpreted impolite because of the wrong choice of the use of language in conversation. This research is aimed at analyzing the politeness used by the female sellers in selling their things in the traditional market in Sumatera Barat. The objective of the research is to identify the maxims used by the female sellers in the interaction with the buyers at the traditional market. The research

was conducted in a traditional market in Sumatera Barat, Batu Sangkar. This market is located at the capital district of Tanah Datar Regency. The visitors of the traditional market of Batusangkar are those from Tanah Datar and the area around Tanah Datar like Payakumbuh and Padang Panjang City. Besides, domestic tourists also shop in this traditional market for traditional food. The sellers are mostly Minangkabau people. The uniqueness of the sellers in this market is that they sometimes offer their merchandise by singing songs. So, they communicate rhythmically. Female sellers mostly do it.

The data were any utterances containing politeness uttered by the female sellers when having interaction with the buyers at a traditional market in Batu Sangkar. To collect the data, observational method (Sudaryanto, 2015) with note-taking and recording technique was used. The open-ended survey was also conducted to dig information about the use of politeness in the conversation. There were around 23 females interviewed. The analysis was done by using the concept proposed by (Oktavianus & Revita, 2013) and (Leech, 1983). The result of the analysis was descriptively done. The tables and charts were used to clarify information about the findings. Besides, there was a percentage involved in order for the number of certain maxims, and other aspects can be displayed.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Being polite is expected by many people in society. Being polite is closely related to very good behavior (Kecskes & Kecskes, 2014). In the interaction, speaking in a polite way is appealed in the sense that others will criticize those who are impolite. Thus, in every domain, human beings try to communicate politely, such as in the interaction in the traditional market at Batu Sangkar, Sumatera Barat.

In this traditional market, females sell their merchandise different from other traditional markets. It is due to the female consideration of politeness when having interaction with the buyers. This can be seen from the maxims used by these females. There are four maxims of politeness used by female sellers at the traditional market in Batu Sangkar. They are maxim of tact, generosity,

approbation, and agreement.

### Tact Maxim

Tact maxim requires the participants to minimize the cost to others and maximize the benefit to others. It means that in implementing the tact maxim, the speakers make the benefit and decrease the cost for the hearers. For example,

- 1) Buyer : *Bara 1 kg?*  
'How much is the price?'
- Seller : *Sakilo 35 ribu.*  
'Thirty five thousand rupiahs per kilogram.'
- Buyer : *Tigo puluh se lah 1 kg, Buk.*  
'Is it possible to be 30.000 rupiahs?'
- Seller : *Ndak bisa do, Nak. Payah carinyo. Ladonyo rancak-rancak, baru-baru. Ndak rugi gai Anak mambali sarago iko do.*  
'I cannot sell at that price. It is difficult to find such good chili. The chili is good. You will not get loose buying them at this price.'

The conversation involves the female seller about 40 years old with a buyer around 50 years old. The buyer wanted to buy a kilogram of chili. The seller offered IDR 35000 for each kg. The buyer regarded such a price expensive. She then tried to have a bargain, but the seller explained why she could not give the same price as the buyer wanted. The seller has her own argument, not for giving the price as the buyer asked. In refusing the request of the buyer, the seller used tact maxim that she tried to maximize the benefit to the hearer by saying that she will be fortunate to buy her chili with the quality and the price. Using informative utterance, the speaker applied tact maxim to maximize.

- 2) Buyer : *Galeh ko bara salusin, Ni?*  
(Pointed at a box)  
'How much is the price of the glasses?'

- Seller : *45, Uni. (Went to the backroom and came back)*  
*Mode itu ciek tingga nyo, Ni.*  
'Fourty five thousand rupiahs, Sist. This is the only model left, Sist.'
- Buyer : Examined the product and realized they were not in good condition)  
*Ndak ado stok lain, Un?*  
'Are there any other stocks, Sist.'
- Seller : ***Uni kan langganan awak. Ko ado nan labiah rancak, Ni. Bali se lah 40.*** (Handed the buyer a box with higher price).  
'You are my customer. This is a better one, Sist. Just pay 40 thousand rupiahs.'

In conversation 2, the seller tried to assure the buyer that the product she offered was qualified. She even stressed that the buyer is her customer that must be given a better one. Thus, she proposed a lower price than offered previously. What she had done is fulfilling the tact maxim in which she minimized the cost to the hearer. By saying ***Uni kan langganan awak. Ko ado nan labiah rancak, Ni***, the speaker is actually maximizing the benefit to the hearer.

The tact maxim does not only occur in directive intention but also in the form of assertiveness. This assertive means to highlight and emphasize the information in order the buyers are interested in buying the merchandise offered.

- 3) Buyer : *Bara tomat sakilo, Mak??*  
'How much is the price of tomatoes?'
- Seller : *6 ribu, Diak.*  
'Six thousand rupiahs, Sist.'
- Buyer : *4 lah, Ni. Ambiak duo .*  
'Is it possible to be decreased, Mom. I want to buy two kilos.'
- Seller : *11 ribulah!*  
'I can only sell eleven thousand rupiahs.'
- Buyer : *Tambah beko yo, Mak.*  
'Give the extra, will you?'

Seller : *Adiak lah langganan. Amak labiahlan beko.*  
 ‘You are my customer. I will add the extra.’

The participants were two women around 50 years old. The buyer wanted to buy the tomatoes. The price offered by the seller was 6 thousand per kilos. However, the buyer asked for a decrease because she planned to buy two kilos. The seller then proposed 11 thousand for two kilos, which means 5.500 IDR per kilo. Finally, the buyer agreed with that price, but she asked for the extra tomatoes. The seller committed by saying that would give that extra because the buyer is her customer. This proposition is a kind of politeness with tact maxim because the speaker is maximizing the benefit of the hearer with the utterance *Adiak kan lah langganan.*

#### **Modesty Maxim**

The approbation maxim requires the speaker to minimize dispraise to others and maximize praise to others. It is commonly delivered in expressive and assertive utterances such as:

- 4) Buyer : *Tomat bara sakilo, Buk?*  
 ‘How much is the price of tomatoes?’
- Seller : *Tomat 6, Diak.*  
 ‘Six thousand rupiah, Sist.’
- Buyer : *Satangah 2 ribu bisa, Buk?*  
 ‘Is it possible to be 2 thousand for a half kilo, Mom?’
- Seller : *Ambiaklah surang!*  
 ‘Please take by yourself!’
- Buyer : *Satangah, Buk.*  
 ‘A half kilo, Mam.’
- Seller : ***Tambahlah ciek lai. Kurang. Tuak urang co Adiak ko bia lah balabiah pado kurang. Apo lai? Lado?***  
 ‘Please add more. It is still lesser than half kilo. More, please. For such a lady, I will give more and never lesser than it must be. What do you want else? Chily?’

The seller was a woman around 60 years old. She was selling vegetables, like tomatoes, potatoes,

and beans. A buyer around 30 came to buy a half kilo of tomatoes. She bargained the price offered by the seller into 2.000 IDR. The seller gave that price and asked the buyer to take the tomatoes by herself. Even the quantity was enough ( a half kilo), the seller still asked the buyer to take more tomatoes by saying ***Tambahlah ciek lai. Kurang.*** This utterance intended to praise the hearer and avoiding the dispraise. The praise is explicitly stated in the proposition ***Tuak urang co Adiak ko bia lah balabiah pado kurang.*** The speaker wanted to praise the hearer for persuading her to buy other things.

#### **Agreement Maxim**

Agreement maxim relates to the agreement of the speakers toward the hearers. They avoid disagreement in the conversation. In the conversation involving the seller and the buyer. This agreement maxim often occurs. This is due to the final conversation in this process is the commitment of the price (Brown, 2015). Both the seller and the buyer commit to a certain price. For example,

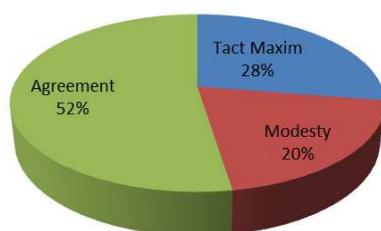
- 5) Buyer : *Wortel bara, Buk?*  
 ‘How much is the price of carrot?’
- Seller : *Wortel 10.*  
 ‘Ten thousand rupiahs.’
- Buyer : *Sakilo?*  
 ‘One kilo?’
- Seller : *Iyo.*  
 ‘Yes.’
- Buyer : *Ndak lapan se, Buk?*  
 ‘Is it possible to be 8.000 IDR, Mam?’
- Seller : *Jan. Ka langganan co adiak ma nio amak maha-maha.*  
 ‘No. To such a customer, I will not sell at a high price.’
- Buyer : *Sabana ko, Buk?*  
 ‘Is it true?’
- Seller : ***Iyo, Diak. Sabananya.***  
 ‘Yes, Sist. It is true.’

The seller is around 40 years old that was selling vegetables. The buyer is around 25 years old who looked beautiful. When the buyer bargained the price of the carrot into 8.000 from 10.000 per kilo,

the seller refused. She then said that she would not sell a very expensive carrot, especially to her customer like that lady. That lady wanted to assure that and directly replied by the seller by saying *Iyo, Diak. Sabananyo*. What the seller stated is a kind of agreement. She did not say any disagreement in her utterance. Thus, the politeness being conducted is an agreement maxim.

The politeness is kept being implemented by Minangkabau females. Even the interaction occurs in the traditional market. Such politeness is realized by the use of three maxims of politeness. They are tact, modesty, and agreement. Maxim. The occurrence of the maxim is various in the sense that the agreement maxim occurs at the most, which is 52.5% followed by tact maxim, 27.5%, and modesty maxim, 20%. This occurrence can be seen in the following chart 1.

**The Occurrence of the Maxim of Politeness**



**Fig. 1. The Occurrence of Maxim of Politeness by Female Sellers at Traditional Market**

The other three maxims, like sympathy, generosity, and approbation, were not used by the female sellers in the traditional market yet. It is interpreted that the speakers need to focus on the agreement by using persuasion through the previous three. Thus, the buyers will buy their merchandise. The highest occurrence of agreement maxim indicates it.

The agreement maxim is also divided into two. The first is indicated by the use of verbal utterance like *yo, jadih, dih, or ndak baa do*. The second is the non-verbal agreement marked by nodding the head or other body gestures, like just silent or say nothing.

The non-verbal agreement is commonly used when the sellers think that they did not get many benefits from the transaction. Still, they get profit but not as many as they expect. In the Minangkabau language, non-verbal communication plays a very important role in delivering the message and emphasizing the intention of the speakers (Revita, 2013). It is in line with one feature of Minangkabau people in communication is delivering something indirectly and implicitly (Munir, 2016).

#### IV CONCLUSION

Being polite does not recognize the class of speakers. Every human being must be polite in every situation. It even does not care about the status or other social variables. However, being polite is commonly emphasized to females. Even in Minangkabau, women are expected to be more polite than men. It is implanted from an early age. The girls are taught how to behave politely and strictly but not to the boy. It is then continued till they get older. Wherever they are, these women consider being polite, including in selling in the traditional market.

The female sellers in the traditional market still use the polite way of speaking. It is reflected in the implementation of the maxim of politeness. At least, there are three maxims of politeness used by the female sellers in the process of transaction in the traditional market. They are tact, modesty, and agreement. The other three maxims, as proposed by Leech (1983), is not found yet. A limited number of data might cause it. When the research is conducted longer, there possibly other maxims found.

Moreover, the research about politeness is not only limited to being conducted to the female sellers but also the male ones in the transaction. The maxims could be different when being used by the sellers in the modern market. Thus, further research related to politeness can be continued. The object must be very various in the language use.

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